

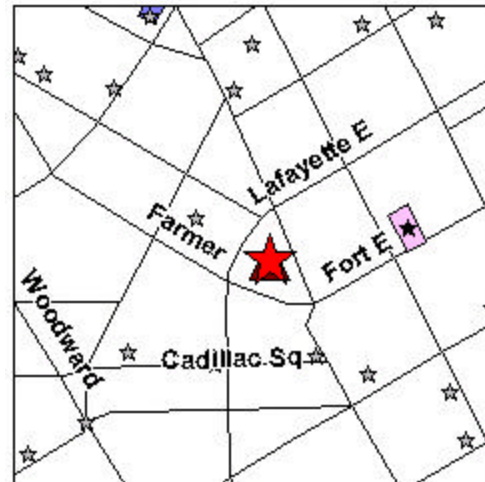
Water Board Building

Address: 735 Randolph

Local v 8/23/2002
State
State Marker
National



Water Board Building, 2002



Historic Overview:

The Detroit River provided the City of Detroit with an unlimited supply of water in the early years of its establishment. By 1836, the City of Detroit had assumed the duty of providing its more than 1,500 residents with an adequate water supply. A five-member board was formed in 1853 to manage the department. Today the Detroit Water and Sewerage Department is made up of 7 members, four from Detroit and one member from Wayne, Oakland and Macomb counties. In 1927 the Board of Water Commissioners petitioned for a new building and the Common Council granted the use of its present site, a triangular piece of land bounded by Randolph, Farmer and Bates Streets. At the time the site currently housed a police station that was demolished in 1928. Louis Kamper designed the 23-story steel frame and concrete skyscraper. The building has an Art Deco influence and is a more simplistic design of his earlier designs in Detroit. The triangular tower has a five-story base, 15-story main tower and a three-story penthouse that is stepped back for the main body of the building. A parking garage with a footprint wider than that of the building is located in the basement. The first floor contains an elevator lobby and customer service area. The second through twentieth floors are used as offices. The fifth floor is public space and contains the Water Board Meeting Room. The penthouse is currently used for storage.

The lobby is paneled in a cream colored marble with a gilded cornice. The elevator doors are brass in an Art Deco design motif. The banking room is a two-story triangular room defined by marble Tuscan columns supporting a painted mural ceiling by George Hamilton Thomas Studios. The mural features a central figure of Neptune surrounded by eight smaller murals. Four of the murals depict important figures in Detroit's early history. Antoine de la Mothe Cadillac, Colonel John Francis Hamtramack, Chief Tecumseh and Commodore Oliver Hazard Perry are represented. Four additional smaller murals depict the development of Detroit's first water works including an early water tower, residents drawing water, a horse driven pump and the construction of the first wooden water mains. The Water Board Meeting Room located on the fifth floor is paneled in walnut from floor to ceiling. Murals on this ceiling depict the official seal of Detroit and an American eagle.

